

Scripture

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[0:00] And good morning, everyone. This week, we're continuing on our topic of spiritual disciplines. So last week, we talked about fasting.

! Today, we're going over scripture. And we're going over these spiritual disciplines as a church because we don't want to just be believers of Christ. We want to be followers. We want to be disciples of Christ. And if we want to be disciples, we need to be also disciplined. So what do you think of when you think of discipline? I think back of when I was in high school, middle school.

I was part of a program called the Royal Canadian Air Cadets in Canada. So this was in Canada run by the military, trying to recruit kids to join the Air Force. So think of maybe like a baby version of the military, trying to instill discipline.

So one summer, I went to a training camp at the Air Force base. And they put us up in these barracks. Think a row. So a giant hall, long hall, with literally 100 guys sleeping in the same room, rows of bunk beds.

[1:07] And they were trying to teach us discipline. So every day when we woke up, we had to make our beds. And it had to be pristine. Not a single wrinkle, not a single crease, nothing on it.

And we would have to stand at attention for inspection, where the officer would pace down the hall. And then every now and then, you'd hear something like, Corporal Anderson, tell me where, could you make a wild guess of where I found this piece of hair?

So that was how they tried to teach us discipline. I was commanded to make my bed, and it was just the chore that I got yelled at to do. So naturally, after two weeks, I went home, and I just never made my bed again.

I don't care about making my bed. I don't like it. And my lovely wife, Jojo, one perk of being married is 15 years later, she makes my bed for me every morning. So shout out to her. Is that how we look at spiritual disciplines of fasting and now reading scripture?

That it's a chore that you're yelled at to do, you're commanded to do, but there's no joy in it. Like, I knew, I felt that way before. I know that as a good Christian, you're meant to read scripture, but I don't maybe even know if I believe what I read or if I do, why does this relate to me?

[2:24] Maybe some of you feel that way. Now, as we look at Psalm 1 today, we see that the spiritual disciplines aren't just meant to be a chore, but a delight.

It's not just discipline, but a desire that we have. The disciplines are for our joy. When we read scriptures, Psalm 1 says we're blessed, happy, filled with joy.

Is joy part of your vocabulary in talking about the spiritual disciplines? That's what the Psalm says in various translations. It says, blessed is the man or happy is the one or all the joys of those whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night.

Oh, the joys of loving God's word. And as we go through this Psalm, I want us to feel that there is joy in God's word, that yes, I am blessed, happy, fulfilled, complete.

If I live in God's word rather than sin, we'll break it down into three points. Blessed are those who adore God's word, who abide in God's word, and blessed are those who act on God's word.

[3:28] Now, since we're discussing scripture today, it's only fitting that we stand for God's word. So please stand out of reverence for God's word, but not just that, out of joy, because as we worshiped, we stood with our hands up, praising God.

And we can do so also in reading from God's word. So Psalm 1. Blessed is the man who walks not in counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

But his delight is on the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season, and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. First, blessed are those who adore God's word.

[4:34] We see that in the first two verses. It says, blessed is the man who stays away from sin, who walks on the counsel of the wicked. We'll get back to that in a second. But instead, verse 2, his delight instead is in the law of the Lord.

In other words, blessed are those who adore, who love God's word. Now, what does it mean to be blessed? It simply means to be happy, joyful, flourishing. We can see that when we compare other translations that say happy or joyful.

In other words, just life's good. Blessed, and it says here that blessed is the man here, but there's no reason to think that this applies only to men. So, ladies, don't worry. This applies to you also.

Verse 2 also says that his delight is in the law of the Lord. It says literally law of the Lord. So, why do we say God's word scripture here today? The word law there is the Hebrew word Torah, which sometimes can mean the first five books of the Bible.

But it can also more broadly in the Psalms mean generally God's word, his instruction, his verbal instruction. So, God's word, which we now have in the form of the Bible.

[5:41] So, blessed are those who love God's word. How do we love God's word, though? Do you have a love for God's word? It first comes from a love for God himself.

We see this, for example, in Psalm 119, verse 10. It says, Or verse 12.

Blessed are you, O Lord. Blessed are you. Therefore, teach me your statutes. Teach me your word. Right? Or also, we see that if Jojo wrote me a love letter, my wife wrote me a birthday card, I would want to read that.

Not because I love the card, but because I love her. So, this love for God's word comes from a love for God himself. Now, looking back to verse 1, there's another factor at play.

Sin is contrasted with this love for God's word. God's word doesn't mix with sin. They're incompatible, kind of like trying to mix oil with water. You can't love God's word and love sin.

[6:46] It says, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, who stands in the ways of sinners, and sits in the seat of scoffers. But instead, blessed is the man who renounces sin.

So, blessed is the man who loves God's word. These are two different directions you can take. It's kind of like taking a train to Kennedy Town versus Chaiwan. You can't be in both places at once.

And why is that? Because God's word addresses sin. Jesus says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. But there's another aspect to it, which is sin prevents us from understanding and loving God's word also.

Sin blinds us from tasting the beauty of God's word. When we read God's word, we need both our head and our hearts. We need to understand in the head, but also have that drop into our hearts. And I've heard some of you say that I don't know how to read God's word. It's confusing sometimes. I don't understand it. And yes, there's technique to learn.

[7:48] There is a science and art to interpreting scripture. We need to apply our heads and know how to do that. But also, it could be a matter of the heart. I was talking to a friend another day, and he said that he was trying to read through the Bible in a year.

And he's been reading Genesis and Exodus, but then recently hit a roadblock. And I asked him, what's up? Did you not understand it? Did it not make sense? And he said, no, I get it.

I understand. But the problem is that I didn't really like it. I wasn't comfortable with what I was reading. It made me feel uncomfortable, so then I just stopped. And I know this brother, he's generally, he wants to wrestle with the word and get to know it and submit to it.

But I wonder if some of us feel that way, but give up and stop reading. That we know what God's word says in our heads, but we don't agree with it in our hearts.

I know what God's word says about money, about sex, about power. I know what it says. I hear you, God, on the cost of discipleship, but I don't really like what I'm reading.

[8:55] So I'll just, I'll just stay away from this book. Is there anything you're holding onto anything in your heart that's preventing you from loving the word of God? Is there anything we need to confess and turn away from?

See, the journey to loving scripture begins first with loving God. And Bible says, we sang about it today, that we need the blood of Jesus and the work of the spirit.

God's word says that we were all dead in our sins, six feet under and with hearts of stone. And so God sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. And he raised Jesus up to life and we have new life in him also.

The Holy Spirit, he reached into our hearts. He grabbed our hearts of stone and squeezed it, gripped it and caused it to be and be alive and living and active, a heart of flesh. Such that we can love God and his word.

We need that heart. We need that transformation from God. And I know some of you are thinking, I believe in Jesus, but so often I don't feel like reading scripture.

[9:58] I don't, I don't have that desire. I want to, but I don't have it. Don't be discouraged. We're all on a journey here. We're all at different places. Don't be discouraged, but know that God calls you higher.

He wants you to abide in his word. He wants you to love it and be in it, to have a blessed and abundant life. He promises us that. So to cultivate that thirst for scripture, if you're struggling to have that desire for the word, to know what that looks like.

If you think back to a time when you first heard the gospel, when you first heard the word of God, or sometime when you heard it in a sermon, you're like, whoa. God is good.

Is there a time like that for you? That's, that's a taste. That, that, that is when you heard the word of God and it fell into your heart. Remember what that tastes like.

Remember that feeling. And know that God promises you that when you look into his word, that this, that same emotion you felt, that's available for you today.

[11:00] That you can, you can have that if you open up God's word and read it for yourself today. Also pray, pray to love God more, pray to love his word more.

So personally for me, every, every time I, pretty much every time I open up scripture, I, I pray for God to show himself to me in it. I, I confess in faith what it says in Psalm 19, that the word of God is the law of the Lord is perfect.

It is sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. I take that by faith and ask God, help my unbelief. Help me to feel that today. And also I pray from Psalm 119, 18, that open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your law.

Help me to see you, not just in my head, but in my heart, that you are good. Show me your glory. Pray to savor the joy of God's word and keep praying. Even if you don't notice any change immediately, keep praying.

I remember some, some days in my, in my first year of university, I, I didn't even know if I believed God's word. I, I read it for years, but I didn't know if it was relevant.

[12:05] I didn't, I didn't even know if I really believed what God said about how he created the world, the flood. And I had, but I prayed to God regularly. I prayed, God, if you're there, I didn't even know if I fully believe, but if you were there, help me to see you in the Bible.

And he answered and he still answers me today. Every time, every day when I read and open up his word. And I know he'll answer you too, because he promises, if you seek me, you'll find me asking to be given to you.

Pray to encounter God through his word. There's also a bit of a flywheel effect because the more we read God's word, the more we get to know him, the more we love him, the more we'll want to get to know him more as we read God's word.

Which brings me to my second point. Blessed are those who adore God's word. And also blessed are those who abide in God's word, who live in God's word and soak in God's word. Let's read verse two.

Blessed is the man whose delight is on the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night. The one who loves God's word also abides in it.

[13:08] They meditate on it day and night. Now we talked about fasting last week. In fasting, we're refraining from food. We give up certain foods, not for the sake of depriving ourselves, but we empty ourselves in order to fill ourselves up with something else.

It's different from meditation for Christianity. It's different from in Eastern religions where maybe in Buddhism or when you're doing yoga, you empty yourselves and try to think of nothing and desire nothing. Goals to detach and rid yourself of desires.

That's not what we do when we fast or meditate on scripture. The goal is not to be empty with no desire, but instead is to fill ourselves with a passionate desire, a passionate love for God. Meditating on God's word means to think constantly over his word, repeating it over in our heads, maybe even repeating it out loud and having it fill our minds and fill our hearts, but being constantly soaking in it.

If reading is like eating food, then perhaps meditating on God's word is like chewing it so that you could break it down and savor and taste it. Before swallowing.

[14 : 17] Also, verse three says that this is the result of someone who's meditating on God's word. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers. This is a picture of what it means to be blessed. Imagine someone takes, say, an apple seed and plants it in the ground by the river of God's word.

Now, the seed, it starts out small, but it starts to grow. It takes time for it to grow. Root, shoot into the ground. Root it in God's word. And the tree is thirsty to drink from God's word.

And it takes time. But over time, this tree, starting from something small, grows tall, stately, majestic. And when it is grown, there can be an earthquake.

There can be a typhoon. But that tree isn't going anywhere because the roots sink deep into the word of God. There may be tough times. He might get laid off, go through a breakup.

[15 : 14] Someone, family member gets sick. But the tree stands firm, steady, and unshakable. Rain or shine. Good times, bad times.

Leaves stay green and do not wither. Because he's constantly abiding in God's word and drinking from that. And that's where the tree finds hope. And in season, when fall comes around, the apples are fully grown.

And they fall to the ground and bear fruit 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. In all that he does, he prospers. So do you want to be like that? Well, a tree doesn't grow overnight.

It grows day by day, month by month, year over year, decade over decade, from meditating, being rooted in God's word, drinking in, soaking in it. It takes practice and habit, discipline.

So is that something we want? Do we want to instill these disciplines? Or instead, will our roots be shallow and the branches dry and rotting when times of trouble come?

[16 : 23] Do you know someone who's like that? Who's rooted in God's word, abides in it, and has a life described by the psalm? We need to abide in God's word. And we can do so by, we can abide in God's word by developing a discipline of reading God's word.

And I hope we can all agree that this discipline is more than just reading the notification in our Bible app when it pops up every day. Or seeing people post about the Bible on Instagram.

And some of you also have a habit of reading daily devotionals, which talk about God's word. That's good. But on top of reading only what others say about the Bible, I would like all of us to be able to develop the muscle of reading it for ourselves, to see what God is speaking to us directly for ourselves.

And you also might not get the urge to suddenly overnight read scripture. That's okay. It takes time to develop and grow. It happens little by little, maybe too slow for the eye to see. The tree doesn't grow overnight.

But commit to reading just a bit every day. And see if that doesn't prove to be a fruitful habit later on. On top of reading, I also encourage us to memorize God's word.

[17 : 37] Memorizing is a good way to meditate on scripture. Because when you memorize, in order for a verse to stick, you have to repeat it tens, maybe hundreds times for it to stay in your mind.

The process of memorizing naturally forces you to meditate on scripture. Now, famous pastor John Piper said this, and I personally agree that I've never met a weak Christian who memorizes scripture.

I've never met a person who's devoted to memorizing scripture, who doesn't have the strength to fight the fight for joy. Okay, memorize the Bible. So we're fighting a spiritual battle, and we need to put on the whole armor of God.

The word of God, Ephesians 6 says, is our sword. Now, John Piper also said that we have only one offensive weapon, the sword of the spirit, the word of God.

But what many Christians fail to realize is that we can't draw the sword from someone else's scabbard. If we don't wear it, we can't wield it. If the word of God does not abide in us, we will reach for it in vain when the enemy strikes.

[18:41] But if we do wear it, if it lives in us, what mighty warriors we can be. And I don't know how I would have the strength to fight as a Christian without a sword, because there's so many things the world's trying to teach me and convince me of.

I don't know how I could walk into battle without a weapon. So I urge you all, let us pick up our weapons and memorize God's word. So that when Satan says, how can you face God? You're unworthy. We know that God's word says, God showed his love for us, and that while we are still sinners, Christ died for us. Or when Satan says, how can a loving God let that happen to you? God's word says, this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

And when Satan says, just, you're missing out. Just make money, sit back and relax, enjoy your life. God's word says, in his presence, there's fullness of joy. At his right hands are pleasures forevermore.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field that man found and hid. And in his joy, he sells all he has and buys that field. Or when Satan says, you can do it. Or you know what? You can't do it.

[19:50] God's word says, we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this passing power belongs to God and not to us. Or when Satan says, you've sinned again, you're guilty. How can you face God? God's word says, who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God? Who indeed is interceding for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No. And all these things were more than conquerors through him who loved us. But I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Satan, what do you have to say? Case closed. Fully acquitted. There is no way I could fight the fight of faith without the word of God. Church, pick up your sword.

Because when we read scripture, and love scripture, and memorize the scripture, we can wield the sword of the spirit and say, be gone, Satan, for it is written. Blessed is the man who meditates on God's word day and night.

[21:06] Someone also said, we need both daggers and long swords. So both short verses and long passages. We can wield both of those.

We can memorize short daggers, punchy verses. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Or we can pick up long swords, long passages. For example, eight years ago, I memorized the book of Ephesians.

Over the span of a month, it took a lot of work, five verses a day. But since then, every day for five years, for eight years, I've carried this book with me.

And I've been able to meditate on it day and night. Repeating it. Letting it shape how I think. Shape my worldview. How I see the world. And it's imprinted so deep in my mind.

The goal is not just to have it in your head. But to have it imprinted so deep in your head that it sinks into your heart. That I exist for the glory of God. That everything is created for him.

[22:10] So that he can show the riches of his grace in Christ. My life is for the glory of God. That changes you. That changes how you live your life.

That changes whether you love sin. Or you're living for him. Have you considered memorizing a passage in the Bible? Does it sound crazy to memorize a whole chapter or even a book?

We can start small. So I encourage you to don't just go ahead and aim to memorize a whole book. If you haven't memorized scripture before, start from a verse, a few verses.

But I also encourage you to try it. I started memorizing. The first passage I started memorizing was Ephesians 2, 1 to 10. That's a good one that goes through the whole gospel.

So, yeah, if you haven't considered trying it before, think about it. Now, as I say this, I also admit that I personally haven't had a good discipline of memorizing scripture in a while.

[23:09] I memorized, I used to memorize scripture a lot. But I was convicted to try it again while preparing for this. So for this Lent, while fasting, I'm personally also going to try to memorize the book of Philippians this Lent.

So consider doing that with me. Consider memorizing some scripture so that together we can abide in God's word. And I also want us to think, what are we meditating on?

What are we thinking about day and night? Because know it or not, we're all meditating on something. The world around us, our culture is bombarding us with things to think about and meditate on. Just follow your heart and be authentic to who you are.

Or you're only worth as much as your salary or the grades that you get. Or how dumb do you have to be to believe in this medieval book still?

Think of the last TV show you've watched. What values does that promote? Or song lyrics. We definitely meditate on lyrics, right? You just hear one catchy line and it'll just play through your head all day.

[24:13] All you got to do is just meet me at the apatapata. But why? Why, Rosé? Meet you there for what? To play board games? What is it that we're thinking about all day?

We become what we behold. We morph into what we meditate on. That's why we need the word of God. So that rather than what the world is putting in front of our faces, we can stare at the face of Jesus and become like him to be transformed like him.

Imagine if in your daily life, scripture randomly popped up in your head that as you were walking down the street going to work, you'd think blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. That that's what filled your mind instead of maybe baby shark popping up in your head.

How would that transform you? Well, that's what happens when you memorize scripture. Blessed are those who adore God's word. Blessed are those who abide in God's word.

And lastly, blessed are those who act on God's word. So you won't just do to hear and memorize and wield God's word without taking action. His word calls us to take action.

[25:22] As it says in James, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves. Let's read on from verse four. It says that the wicked are not sober like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. We saw in verse three that those who adore and abide in God's word are like this big majestic tree. This full and blessed life is found by those who meditate, memorize God's word. In verse four, there's a contrasting image that the chaff, the wicked are like chaff in the wind.

So what is chaff? We're not farmers, so we're maybe not familiar with it. It's a farming analogy. Chaff is the waste. When you harvest grain, it's the protective casing around it that goes to waste. It harvest grain, crush it, throw it into the wind, and the grain would remain because it's heavier, but the wind would drive away the lighter chaff.

So maybe in modern terms, have you ever bought an ice cream bar from 7-Eleven? You rip open the wrapper, go to the garbage can, you're standing right next to it, you try to put it in, and all of a sudden, this gust of wind blows, catches it, or it just catches the air.

[26:32] And then, that's, that's, yeah, has that happened to you? I don't know why I'm bringing this up. But the Bible says the wicked are like that. A waste that's, that's, that's blown away by the wind.

Contrast this, this tree, this permanent, strong, majestic tree with, with garbage fluttering in the wind. That's what God's word says.

Now, why do we say, why do I say blessed are those who act on God's word? If you look at the Psalm, Psalm 1, again, you'll notice that there's no command to follow. There's no command here. There's no imperative to act on. There's no rule to follow here. This Psalm doesn't tell you what to do, at least not explicitly. Sometimes the Bible has commands.

It says, you know, thou shall not steal, thou shall not murder. But sometimes God chooses instead to appeal to our hearts. Not merely commands, but this passionate plea. Hey, this is what happens to you when you're righteous.

[27:31] This is the blessed life you can have. But this also is the consequence of sin. This is what happens to the wicked. Blessed are those who come to me and find rest for my soul. But also, this is the judgment for the wicked.

The question then is, what are we going to do? When we read and believe God's word, we can't keep living like how we used to live. The consequences of sin are too dire.

And the reward of seeking God is too great to pass up. There's no command in this Psalm. But don't you want to take action and take hold of this blessed life?

See, God's word is radical truth that demands a radical response. Because if Jesus died for me, then I have to turn from my sins. If Jesus rose from the dead, then he really is a God worth following.

If God wrote this book, then I want to turn over every page, every chapter, every verse, to get to know every word of this love letter that he wrote me. And that's why we discipline ourselves.

[28:31] That's why we read scripture. Because I want to take hold of this promise and taste and see that the Lord really is good and have this blessed and full life that he promises. So I will discipline myself to adore, to abide, and to act on God's word.

So practically speaking, if we did want to dive into God's word, what does that look like? First, we can pray, right? Pray for greater love for the word and pray that when you read today, before you read, pray that as you open scripture, pray in faith that God's word really is good and ask him to open your eyes so that you can see the glory of God through the word today.

Pray. Pray. We also talked about memorizing the word. And I have a challenge for you all. Whether it's a short verse or a long passage, try memorizing something.

Try memorizing God's word this Lent. If you're in life group, consider discussing with each other.

Have you ever memorized scripture? Is there a passage that you can memorize together?

Let's push each other. Encourage each other to be meditating on God's word. And lastly, practically, I want to focus on the discipline of reading scripture.

[29:53] Simple. Read the Bible. Get into the habit of reading the word. Build the habit of reading regularly. And specifically, aim to build a habit of reading daily.

So I don't say daily as a command. There's nowhere in the Bible saying that you have to read the Bible daily. But if anything, the standard is higher. The psalm is calling us to meditate on God's word day and night constantly, to be constantly stoking in his word.

I say, build a daily habit out of wisdom. Why is that? Think of Snapchat. How do you build habits?

Think of Snapchat. I think one reason why it got very popular is because there's streaks.

There's a streak. You have to send something every day. And that quickly builds a habit, this mindset. I have to do this every day. This builds a habit. Right?

So if I look on your phone, I see a 200-day streak. I know you can read the Bible. You have it in you. Right? Also secular author James Clear, he says in his book, Atomic Habits, that success is the product of daily habits, not once in a lifetime transformations.

[31:01] He also writes that good habits make time your ally, but bad habits make time your enemy. In other words, a tree doesn't grow overnight. It takes years. You see the rings in the tree year after year that build as the tree grows.

Commit to reading scripture daily and over months and years. See if you don't grow in your love for God. See if you develop a habit of reading scripture, whether you will not love him more and grow to want to read his word more.

See if you don't become like a tree planted by streams of water. Aim to read daily. Not a command, but I can't stress that enough. And even if it's a few verses, just build the habit of it.

It's okay to start small. So why don't we use this period of Lent while we're fasting to also build up the habit of reading scripture? And if you're new to reading the word of God, I also recommend that you read through a book rather than jumping around to different verses at a time.

Because that is how you develop the muscle of reading scripture for yourselves and understanding for yourselves. Being able to know what God is speaking to you. Instead of just only getting God's word through devotionals or through sermons.

[32:18] If you're new to reading scripture, I recommend reading through one of the gospels first. So Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. These books talk about the life of Jesus.

All scripture is pointing to Jesus and these talk about Jesus directly. My life group at the moment is going through the book of John together. We're reading maybe half a chapter a day.

So pick a book and read through it bit by bit. And if you look at your Bibles, there's these section headings in bold normally. Those are good ways to divide it up. So one goal you could have is just to aim to read one section a day.

Or if you want to read more, be my guest. You could read the whole book in one sitting. But if not, break it up. Break it up into sections. Start small. Just aim to read something every day. And this is not a rule, but we want to stay disciplined.

Just develop, flex the muscle of reading scripture. Even if you don't understand, but believing, hey, this is what God's promise is. And I want it. So I will pray and discipline myself to try to see what God will speak to me.

[33:21] Personally, for the past eight years, I've used plans that take me to the whole Bible once a year. That comes up to about three, four chapters a day. Now, I don't think you need to read through the whole Bible every year.

But I think every Christian should aim to read through the Bible somewhat regularly. Because if we say that this book is the word of God, we believe every word that it says, we should try to get to know it.

Or if my wife wrote me a birthday card, I'd at least read it once before shelving it away. Okay. So consider reading the Bible.

Maybe over a year, over two years, over three years. Just try to get started on it. And as you read, meditate over what you're reading.

If reading is eating, then meditating is chewing, breaking it down, savoring what we eat. So my top tip to do that as we're reading is to try to summarize what you're reading into one sentence.

[34:24] Try to summarize what you're reading into one sentence. Because sometimes when I read early in the morning, it's 7 a.m. I'll just read through the same line five times. Or I'll get through the whole passage, skim through it, and I wouldn't be able to tell you what it said.

So to keep my mind sharp, I find it to be a good habit to try to, as I'm reading, distill down what I'm reading into one sentence. And then the other benefit of that is that after you summarize it, after you got the essence of the passage out, now you have something to meditate on.

Now you have something to keep in your head all day as you're going through your day. Because I can't keep a whole chapter in my head, but I can maybe hold on to one thing that the Word of God is saying to me. So personally, as I read, I will have my Bible here and a highlighter.

And I just highlight verses as I go along. And I know James, he's a really big fan of paper Bibles. I was a software engineer. I studied computer science. When I study scripture, I also pull out, I have Bible software that I use.

I can tell you all about that. But personally, when I read the Bible devotionally, I still take out my Bible and a highlighter. I have a notebook here.

[35:32] And I will copy into my notebook key verses that stand out. Because I find that writing, the process of physically writing, slows me down and allows me to chew on what I'm reading a bit more.

To not just skim over it like I'd be reading on a phone, scrolling through a news article. But to slow down and think over each word as I'm writing. So that's what I do. I'll copy down key verses into my Bible, into my notebook that summarize the passage.

For example, in this passage in Psalm 1, I might copy down, Blessed is the man whose delight is on the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. So these verses here, that sums up the passage very well.

But sometimes there's other passages that don't, where there's no one verse that does. So I like to just think it over and come up with a one sentence phrase, one sentence summary that captures the main idea.

For example, here we could say, Blessed are those who love God's word and who live in it rather than in sin. And then I'll just carry out that verse that I wrote in my notebook or that sentence I wrote down in my notebook.

[36:36] And think over it as I'm sitting there in my desk. I'll just open up my notebook, read through what I wrote down and think about it. What does this mean to me? What does it mean to love God's word?

Why is someone who does that blessed? How is sin and God's words opposed? How do I love God's word and meditate on it? What does this mean for me? How do I need to change my life to be more rooted in God's word?

And then it gives me things to pray about. If you struggle with how to pray or you get distracted, scripture gives you ammo to pray through. Everything that you read from scripture, the insights, we can pray about it and pray for it to apply in our lives.

And so I see all these, these three things, prayer, meditating on scripture, reading scripture, it all fits together. Right? The more we read and meditate on scripture, the more ammo we have to pray with.

And the more we pray, the more we love scripture and want to read it more. And we just, we just grow in our spiritual disciplines and we grow to love God's more. That's what we want to do as disciples of Christ.

[37 : 40] We want to not just believe in him, but love him and follow him with everything we have. So church, let us be disciplined. Let's be intentional this Lent to build habits of reading the word.

Let's change, to build habits that will bear fruit over years, decades, as we sit and steep and be rooted in God's word. We don't, we're not disciplined because we're commanded to, only because we're commanded to, but because we want desire.

We want desire that leads to delight, not discipline for discipline's sake, but so that we can have what God's word promises to have this joy and blessed in life.

To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Is that what we want church? Do we want to love God? Let's read the word. Let's abide in it, meditate on it, act on it.

Let's pray. Lord, we take hold of what you say by faith, that blessed are those whose delight is on the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night.

[38 : 52] Lord, we pray that you'd make that true for us. Give us this desire for your word. Help us to see you as we open our Bibles. We trust that your law is perfect.

Your words are sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. Help us to believe that and to act on it. And as we read your words, that you would open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Help us to be transformed to be like you as we behold the glory of the Lord. Help us to be transformed into the same image. God, we want to be a church that is devoted to your word, devoted to the apostles' teachings.

Help us to discipline ourselves out of joy. Give us joy in knowing you and knowing your word. We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Lord God, we commit to clinging on every word that you say.

[40 : 01] We live in a time that is confusing. It's dividing. It's hurting. It's hurting. Amen. But your word brings life.

Your word brings light. So we seek. We seek to walk daily in your word, in your presence.

And to cling on to the promises that you've made to us in the word. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Lord. Thank you that we get to do this together. Thank you that your spirit is present, revealing to us the mysteries of God. Thank you, Lord.

Amen. Holy Spirit, stir up in our hearts a passion for your name, a passion for your word. Amen.

[41 : 12] We may not want to, but we want to want to. We may not love you, but we want to love you. We want to love you more. And we are fully trusting you, and by your grace we will.

By your grace we are. Thank you. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Please take a seat. Thank you, Gabe, for leading us in that.

I was particularly excited, actually, to have Gabe share that with us, because the six, seven years that I've gotten to know him. Actually, there's one commitment that I'll have to all of us here, is that we seek to speak from a place of authority.

In the sense that, hey, we're not asking you to do anything that we don't do ourselves. That we're actually ones pushing us forward, leading the way in doing this, because we know that it's empty if we don't.

And actually Gabe is someone who I've just respected over the years, and just his thirst and his hunger for the word. And I pray that this is the same for you. Last week I said that we can't expect what we don't teach.

[42 : 31] And what we're hoping to do is make disciples here of all of us. And in order to do that, to be disciples, there must be an element of discipline. Whether we really like it or not. Actually, even young people, students will recognize this, that there's a need to have discipline when it comes to even studying, right?

You have to. When you want to study in something, when you want to get better in something, you have to have that discipline. And so why don't we have it with God? Why don't we have it when we are pursuing God? That's so important.

But the goal isn't just to be disciplined. Because actually, I would say, maybe as a culture, we're pretty good at that. Or at least just regimenting and just following rules. We're okay with that. But the goal is, how can we move from discipline to then desire?

Just going, God, you know what? I didn't want this before, but now I kind of do. And you go from that discipline to desire, and you're like, okay, I think I'm getting there. And as Gabe says, how do you get there?

You pray. God, I don't feel like, Leviticus is rough. It's hard. But God, there's something here. Help me want this. Help me want you. That's the main thing.

[43 : 32] And then we move from discipline to then desire. And the goal is then delight. And how many of us here want to delight in the Lord? Want to feel the joy that comes from being in his presence? Being able to live a life that is just colorful in the way we see things because of him.

We only can do that if we go through the first two of discipline and desire. If we go through those two, the prayer, the hope, the promise is that we'll end up with delight.

And when we delight in the Lord of the Lord, that's when he'll grant us the desires of our hearts.

That's when we will live the life that he's called us to. So join us on this journey. We are a week and a little bit into Lent now. And so last week was about fasting.

Fasting, actually the art of denial is probably the hardest discipline of all. It's saying, I want this, but I want God more. And I was reflecting with someone the other day. I've been fasting and praying for certain brothers.

And I'm like, there is no better reminder than to pray for my brothers when I'm hungry. Like, honestly, now it's time to pray. When you're full, you just don't feel it. So I encourage you, you're not too late.

[44 : 33] Well, you are too late, but it doesn't matter. If you want to start, if you should start, and I'm saying, please, I'm urging you, do start. Think about something, how you can fast. And don't just say, oh, yeah, maybe, maybe I'll do it.

Maybe I'll cut out McDonald's today. Just be even more intentional than that. Being saying, actually, this is what I'm doing it for. This is what I'm cutting out. Because this is a part of my life that I don't want to be. So I'm giving it up to God.

So be intentional and be clear about what that is to fast. And then as Gabe says, fill it with the word. I have a dear friend here who I won't name. He said he's also going to fast from using words that are not appropriate.

And he said, that's hard. And day two, he was like, I'm struggling with not using curse words. And I was like, fill it up. Fill your mouth with scripture. Find one phrase that you just repeat over and over again.

And keep saying that F word of faith. Faith. It is all about faith. Just keep saying it. So fast in a way that really, really just helps you draw close to him.

[45 : 33] And so I'm really grateful, really grateful. He's given us a lot of tips. And he has the authority to do this because he's gone through it. And I would say, please follow them. Please use them. Any of them.

Even one. But it is all about the heart. Because there's only so much you can do. I went to visit Florence's dad this week. Those of you who don't know, Florence and her dad are in the field of dentistry.

So there's not many people that make me cry. But he is one of them. And every time I go. And the first thing he said to me was, I haven't seen you for a while.

It's been two years. And I was like, yes, I know. And then he makes me cry because he sticks that sharp metal thing into my mouth. And I was like, there's a sermon analogy here somewhere.

I think there are those of us who simply show up to a dentist once in a while. But we don't brush our teeth. And we don't floss. And then we wonder why actually our teeth are not clean.

[46 : 29] And that we've got gum disease. And we've got all these problems. Reading scripture, the disciplines is that. You come on a Sunday morning, two weeks out of four, to get some feeding.

And we open up the words together. And that is good. But I'll tell you, that's not where the real meat is. That's not where the good stuff is. The good stuff is when you do it day to day.

Have that discipline that turns into desire. And the Lord promises it will turn into delight. And so the last thing I'll say is, the reason why we're all here, because why don't we all just go home and read the Bible ourselves, is because we do it together.

There's something about the public reading of scripture, the public opening of the word, that is actually really important. So if you are in a life group, commit to doing the reading plans that I know they gave. And many of the life groups are doing. But if you're just like, okay, I need to read the word, but I don't really know how, find one person and say, this week I'm going to do this. Can you ask me about it next week? It's as simple as that. Next week, we're going to do another spiritual discipline. I won't tell you what it is yet because I haven't quite decided, but we will go through it.

[47 : 33] And there are other ones that are going to be really close to my heart, solitude and worship and the Sabbath. And so I encourage you, if we're going to be disciples, keep thinking about this.

How can I become more disciplined so I can have more desire, so I can have more delight? Can I finish with just a final word of prayer and then we'll let everyone go for lunch? And remember, remember to pray for our football team today, okay?

It's coming home, it's coming home. Let's pray. Father, we hang on every word of yours because we love you. And we ask that you would fill us, would fill us with hunger and thirst for you.

Lord, we want whatever Gabe is drinking. We want that same passion for your word. Remember in Acts where they were just devoted to the apostles' teaching, which is your word.

So we humble ourselves. And we ask that you would instill in us this hunger this week to fast, to pray, to read your word. Lord, we meditate on it day and night, allow it to permeate into the very depths of our souls.

[48 : 47] Thank you, Lord. Thank you for this time. Thank you for this family. Thank you most of all for you. We seek to put you front and center in everything that we do.

In your name we pray. Amen.